

To: The Human Services Committee

February 2023

I am submitting testimony in support of H.B. 6616, "An Act Concerning Expansion of HUSKY Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status." This bill will expand coverage for income-eligible people, regardless of immigration status, until age 21 (as of Jan. 1, 2024) and then until age 26 (as of Jun. 1, 2024). I support this legislation, because it is an important next step toward the goal of ultimately achieving coverage for all Connecticut residents.

There are stark realities which make this legislation crucial to ensuring the welfare of our members of our community. Here are a few:

- 58% of the 113,000 undocumented residents of Connecticut do not have health insurance.
- Of the 561,000 adults in Connecticut with a mental health condition, 160,00 did not receive their needed care, 1/3 of which went without care because of the cost.
- Members of marginalized and vulnerable populations, by race, gender sexuality, ability, and/or immigration status, etc. have increased risk of experiencing mental health challenges due to systemic barriers and oppression.

If this initiative is passed, it is estimated that over 21,000 Connecticut residents would be able to access needed coverage.

In the Jewish tradition, we are commanded to "welcome the stranger." We cannot welcome a stranger or be mindful of the needs of our neighbors, if we restrict their access to fundamental services which ensure their well-being. Our history teaches us, over and over again, that we were all strangers at one time or another. Thus, it is incumbent upon us to extend the hand of welcome and to ensure the well-being of all residents of our communities, in the same way it was extended to us and our ancestors. Thank you for your efforts in ensuring and improving the health and welfare of all of our friends and neighbors.

Shalom (Peace),

Rabbi Tami Elliott Goodman

30 Bigwood Lane

Burlington, CT 06013